

ACUPUNCTURE

PARALYZED FROM THE WAIST DOWN with disk syndrome, Gretchen lay moaning and weak. A veterinarian, having diagnosed the long-haired miniature dachshund's condition, offered her owners a grim choice: He could operate to remove the lower-back calcium deposits -- a risky procedure, with no guarantee of success -- or euthanize her.

Fortunately for Gretchen, another veterinarian, Dr. Stan Gorlitsky of Cleveland, Ohio, offered a different alternative: acupuncture. Dr. Gorlitsky deftly inserted two thin needles into carefully selected points just beneath Gretchen's skin and connected the needles to an electrostimulator (a device that generates low-voltage current). Then he switched on the machine. Gretchen felt no pain from the needles and only a slight tingling sensation from the current.

Ten minutes later, the dog's eyes brightened and she slowly stood up on the examining table. A year (and three \$25 follow-up treatments) later, Gretchen remains free from pain--and from the painkilling drugs that once kept her in a stupor.

Besides disk syndrome, other disorders acupuncture can be used to treat include hip dysplasia, arthritis, allergies, lockjaw, colic, asthma, epilepsy, fevers, chronic infections and bone fractures. It's not that acupuncture miraculously HEALS ailments; rather, the procedure "stimulates certain meridian points in the body, so the body can heal itself," explains Dr. Gorlitsky.

HOW DOES IT WORK? -- Despite a considerable body of scientific research on the subject, acupuncture's effectiveness remains largely a mystery. Dr. Howard Mitchell, a veterinary from Bristow, OK, offers one explanation. Comparing the body's inner workings to a river, he explains, "When there's an ailment in the body, the flow of energy is partially blocked. Like debris blocking a river's flow, metabolic waste and energy back up at a site of injury." So, in damaged or inflamed tissue, the body's normal flow of oxygen, blood and energy is interfered with. Acupuncture corrects the energy imbalance, he says.

Traditionally, acupuncture involves inserting needles just beneath the skin at meridian points and then slowly turning the needles by hand; energy is transferred from the acupuncturist to patient. But nowadays, to speed things up (and to reduce wear and tear on the needle-turner) a battery-run electrostimulator is used to achieve the same purpose. Or, if you squirm at the thought of turning your pet into a living pincushion, a "cold" laser (one that emits harmless low-voltage energy, as opposed to a metal-cutting "hot" laser) can be employed, and is said to work even faster.

Rather than using "conventional" acupuncture for treating arthritic patients, Dr. Terry Durkes, a vet from Marion, IN, implants a tiny gold bead one-half inch or more deep into a specific meridian site. The gold is said to provide a positive charge, offsetting the excess negative charge at the arthritic joint. As balance is restored, calcium deposits are eventually reabsorbed by the body, he says.

Acupuncture also works wonders in treating allergies, Dr. Durkes adds. "I've had an 80% success rate in treating allergies. And these are cases referred to me from other vets who've exhausted conventional medical procedures."

REDUCES MEDICATION USE -- In addition to its ability to accelerate healing, acupuncture may be most widely known as a replacement for chemical anesthesia during surgery. The technique causes naturally occurring morphinelike compounds called endorphins to be released in specific parts of the body. Hence, major surgery can be performed painlessly--with the patient fully conscious.

What's more, acupuncture can reduce the overall need for medication. By injecting antibiotics into a meridian point that corresponds to the site of injury or infection, a vet can reduce the amount of medication needed for treatment. "You can treat an animal more quickly and with less antibiotic by injecting medication directly into the right places", remarks Dr. Durkes.

ACUPUNCTURE (continued)

The International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS) was established in 1975, and now has more than 200 veterinarian members. In an effort to keep "quackupuncture" to a minimum, IVAS provides a certification program for licensed vets, requiring 120 hours of seminars and a comprehensive exam plus 5 case reports.

For a list of IVAS-certified veterinarians, write: Dr. Meredith Snader, IVAS Secretary, RTE. 4, Box 216, Chester Springs, PA 19425.

[This article was condensed from "ACUPUNCTURE WINS THE WEST" by Dave Kendall in the May/June 1989 issue of Mother Earth News, and was sent in by Gayle Sanitate. Thanks.A.]
